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### Fission-fusion cognition in Shakespearean drama

**Citation for published version:**

Anderson, M 2015, 'Fission-fusion cognition in Shakespearean drama: The case for Julius Caesar', *Narrative*, vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 154-168. <https://doi.org/10.1353/nar.2015.0014>

**Digital Object Identifier (DOI):**

[10.1353/nar.2015.0014](https://doi.org/10.1353/nar.2015.0014)

**Link:**

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

**Document Version:**

Peer reviewed version

**Published In:**

Narrative

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# **Fission-Fusion Cognition in Shakespearean Drama: The Case for *Julius Caesar*<sup>1</sup>**

Miranda Anderson

This paper examines how Renaissance notions of the mind and the subject, as constrained and constituted by social means, are narrated and staged in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. This analysis is supplemented by a few references to Montaigne's *Essays*, whose influence on Shakespeare and concern with the nature of the mind and self are long established (Ellrodt). To further ground the case, it begins with two brief overviews: firstly, on narratological approaches to drama and their particular relevance to Renaissance drama, and secondly, on various current approaches to social cognition. I focus on the linked concepts that a multiplicity of agents can operate within a single human being, and conversely that multiple individuals can form a cognitive unit. These related notions of the mind as social, both in Renaissance fictional and factual narratives and in current cognitive science, are understood to be due to human psychophysiological capacities. These capacities both afford and require boundaries and flow between the constituent parts of the self, both as regards those within skull or skin, and as regards those in the world. As I want to highlight the issue of divisions, as well as sharing, between individuals and within an individual I have adopted the physics term "fission-fusion," which has been used by ethology to describe dynamic social networks that periodically merge and divide, and I have reapplied it specifically to cognition in order to capture the malleable and shifting nature of the cognitive units formed (Aureli et al.).

## **Dramatizing narrative**

Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts . . . For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings . . . (*Henry V* 1.1.23, 1.1.28)

This famous prologue might initially seem a more likely candidate than the prologue-less *Julius Caesar* for a defence of a narratological reading of the social mind in Renaissance drama. Firstly, because the appeal to the audience implies their participation is necessary for an effective creation of the playworld. Secondly, because prologues have been interpreted as providing a structural equivalent to the narrator's role in prose fiction, on which classical definitions of narrative have traditionally drawn. Yet research on Renaissance English playscripts from around 1600 suggests that such narratologically-attuned framing features as prologues, choruses, and epilogues, were not necessarily permanent, but were often created for first or for special performances only, with many lost and a few relocated from one play to another (Stern). They are temporary, absent, or unreliable features. This capacity of a play to dispense with a single explicit privileged narrator and to instead leave only a polyphonic array of characters is in itself suggestive of the relevance of drama to exploring notions of the social mind; this capacity also obliquely indicates the relevance of more recent notions of narratology that are not dependent on structures derived from a narrator's roles.

Monika Fludernik bases drama's inclusion in narratological studies on its ability to evoke experientiality and a fictional world, with the minimum requirement the presence of a character on stage ("Narrative and Drama"). Fludernik further describes the way the developing novel adopted the "deep-structural patterns of drama" ("Diachronization" 343). In turn, as Barbara Hardy relates, Shakespeare makes narrative theatrical, for as Hardy argues: "[n]arrative is a primary act of mind, a way of comprehending and constructing social and psychic life, as inevitable and central a subject of drama as of prose fiction" (24). Furthermore, there is an additional level of richness to theatrical performance's treatment of narrative, as Nünning and Sommer have described:

plays do not just represent narratives (i.e. a series of events), they also stage narratives in that, more often than not, they make storytelling, i.e. the art of telling narratives, theatrical. In other words, plays not only represent series of events [mimetic narrativity] they also represent 'acts of narration,' with characters serving as intradiegetic storytellers. (337)

Therefore, rather than attempting to give an account of narrative in Shakespeare that attempts to comply with classical narrative notions, this paper will explore the ways in which Shakespeare himself reflexively employed narrative in one of his works.

Regarding the anxiety to please that marks such entreaties as Puck's promise, "[i]f you pardon, we will mend," Tiffany Stern comments that not only these stage-orations but also the main script is open to revision; this possibility of revision emphasizes the potential impact an audience may have on a performance and even on a playscript (119). The presumed priority and dominance of playscript over performance is another feature discussed in narratological considerations of drama (for example, see Jahn 692); this dominance does not hold true for the Renaissance, and again suggests the social nature of the mind brought to bear on the playscript. Another feature considered in narrative accounts of drama are the stage directions that guide an actual performance or a reader's virtualization of it (Schaeffer 257). Yet in Shakespeare the narratorial hand tends to operate through implicit instructions and narrative details embedded in the dialogue; these often combine metaphorical images with a demand for stage action, such as Ligarius's statement "I here discard my sickness" (Shakespeare 2.1.320), which both symbolises his rejection of bondage and requires his removal of a dressing (see Pasternak Slater 144 and Tribble). Fludernik describes fiction and drama as differing primarily on the discourse level, with drama offering the setting's visual presentation instead of a verbal description ("Narrative and Drama" 361–62); this is less the case, though, with Shakespeare's works, where background descriptions are often given as a verbal supplement to the relatively bare stage. In general, then, what would commonly constitute didascalia is embedded intratextually, and this indicates that Shakespearean drama is not quite as open to "pure invention" as has generally been imagined (Claycomb 173), although it lacks what Manfred Jahn calls the "controlling 'frame'" of lengthy stage directions (672).

## **Social Mind**

In his study of ship navigation, Ed Hutchins makes a case for cognitive systems as distributed through equipment, which incorporates aspects of necessary expertise, as well as through other social agents, like the ship's navigational team that operates collectively as a computational system (155; xiv). The seminal paper on "The Extended Mind" by Andy Clark and David Chalmers mentions that one of the ways in which cognitive processes extend into the world is through other people (17). Deb Tollefsen elaborates on this with the hypothetical example of a forgetful philosopher and his wife Inga, who enables him to orient himself in the world. Stephen Kosslyn names this notion "social prosthetic systems" (SPSs): systems in which other social agents act as mind-extensions. SPSs are other people whom we "rely on . . . to extend our reasoning abilities and to help us regulate and constructively employ our emotions," so that "other people's brains come to serve as extensions of your own brain" ("What Do You Believe"). There is a distinction here, in that Hutchins's accounts focus on collaborative group minds, rather than the socially extended minds, that assign generative and receptive functions to one individual or another, which are offered by Clark, Chalmers, Tollefsen, and Kosslyn: each account raises different issues of agency. Yet all of these accounts highlight the benefits of social extendedness, whereas psychoanalytic and postmodern accounts

tend to expose the problematic elements while eliding the role of the body and the non-sociocultural environment; both positive and negative aspects of social extendedness, and its relation to being embodied and embedded, are explored in this analysis of Renaissance texts, which themselves explore these concerns.

The mirror neuron system has been credited with enabling socially extended cognition, since when one person watches another performing actions, experiencing emotions or narrating action words mirror neurons fire in the motor cortex *as if* the watcher were performing the actions and experiencing the emotions themselves (Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia). Commenting on the theatrical insights provided by the discovery of the mirror neuron system, Bruce McConachie reflects that “[o]ur ability to empathize with the experiences of others through mirroring is the cognitive hook that impels spectator interest in the activities of actor/characters and engages us in the unfolding narrative of a play” (18). Yet studies have shown that individuals with specialized experience of the action performed have a greater intensity of firing in the mirror neuron system than do non-experts (Calvo-Merino). So while mirror neurons indicate the potential for considerable sharing of experience across persons, this evidence suggests that there is also considerable particularity, due to the contingency of subjective experience (Anderson et al., “Involving Interface” 322). Theater is a medium with an immediate feedback loop between actors and audience, and yet since the mental states do not remain identical across different individuals, with the intensity of the mirror neuron firing affected by our own cognitive repertoire, it makes sense that one’s subjective experiences of theater, as with those in the world, involve consistencies and divergences with those of others. We experience fusions and fissions with a dramatic spectacle and with the reactions of others in an audience.

The human capacity to form ad hoc fusions as a means to undertake cognitive processing is underwritten by internal fissions. One’s subjective experience is also dependent on a number of contingencies, so that an individual’s experience of a play on one day or the next will also not be identical. A number of theories argue that distinct phenomenological experience is accompanied by internal fissions. Thomas Nagel argues that while third-person accounts leave out the subjective nature of consciousness, our “simple idea of a single person will come to seem quaint some day, when the complexities of the human control system become clearer and we become less certain that there is anything very important that we are *one of*” (164). While the function of consciousness is social, Jakob Hohwy posits, it is for this very reason that it remains private, as it thereby enables us to optimally integrate other people’s variant perceptual estimates of the world (254). Daniel Dennett instead proposes that the habit of adopting an “intentional stance,” that is, viewing behavior in terms of mental properties, spreads “to cover both other-interpretation and self-interpretation” (159); this implies a shared mechanism for making in inferences about our own and others’ mental experiences. Dennett’s notion that it is intersubjectivity that is primary and that precedes first-person subjectivity is echoed by both Alan Palmer and David Herman (Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 5, 178; Herman 762). Herman further argues against the pervasive literary theory of anti-intentionalism, which claims that it is an error to attempt to assess the intention of an author from his work. Herman points out that anti-intentionalism is counterintuitive to humans’ propensity to ascribe intentions to others, including authors and characters within works, instead he argues that this is as necessary and helpful a part of our readings of literature, as it is of people in real life. Furthermore, within literary texts this ascription of intentions is playfully explored: it is self-consciously staged by Shakespeare in his works, which both depict and rely on humans’ propensity to observe others’ behavior, actions and words and thereby to ascribe attitudes and beliefs to them (both correctly and wrongly).

Charles Fernyhough highlights the social nature of many aspects of internal cognition. Yet this, he argues, places in question Alan Palmer’s emphasis on the distinction between

intermental and intramental thought, although Palmer himself in fact argues that they form a “continuum” (*Social Minds*, 39). Fernyhough conceives of cognition in rather narrow postmodernist terms, calling it “fundamentally semiotic” (272-3). Were this view held valid, it would more markedly undermine Palmer’s achievement in shifting the focus on cognition in the novel from purely verbal forms to a wider spectrum, but Palmer’s broader view of cognition is supported both by his own works and by recent cognitive scientific research on the nontrivial roles that embodiment and environment play in cognitive processes. Palmer’s claim that mental states are not only conveyed through equivalent forms to speech acts in the novel is also pertinent here, since Shakespeare’s narratives, as well as being potentially enacted on a stage, contain embodied and experiential descriptions as a means to convey cognitive processes in action.

The Stanford Encyclopedia’s article on collective intentionality, which is defined as “the power of minds to be jointly directed at objects, matters of fact, states of affairs, goals, or values” acknowledges that “this part of the history of philosophy is largely unwritten,” as it skips from Aristotle to Rousseau and German Idealism in a few sentences, before going on to discuss movements from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards in more detail (Schweikard and Schmid). This may have led to the type of risky claim made by Palmer that the debate on to “what extent is it possible to have knowledge of the workings of other minds?” and to “what purposes should our knowledge of other minds be put?” began in the early nineteenth century (*Social Minds*, 5). Evidence for such a debate on this enduring human trait in *Julius Caesar* is explored in the next section, and the further question of to what extent internal cognition also involves ad hoc coalitions of quasi-autonomous agencies that require first-person inference is touched on. Finally, another debate newly raised concerns the extent to which discourse between two characters constitutes a cognitive process (for further Renaissance instances see Anderson, *The Renaissance Extended Mind*).

### ***Julius Caesar***

The co-authoring of plays or re-use of source material results in a different form of creative collaboration than those discussed above. The story of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* is primarily based on Thomas North’s translation of Plutarch’s *Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans*. A multiperspectival account of the murder scene progressively accumulates details across Plutarch’s lives of Julius Caesar, Brutus, and Antony in a way that Shakespeare mirrors in his play. The sudden onslaught of Caesar’s stabbing is staged and reported in metaleptical, proleptical, and analeptical narratives, which provoke a consideration of the respective merits of mimetic and diegetic media and of the power of their combined or independent use. Yet the narratives that evoke the workings of minds are more reliant on notions we also find expressed in Montaigne. Montaigne himself admired Plutarch, quoting him nearly 400 times in the essays, but the nature of the mind is little discussed in the relevant lives, except a brief but pertinent passage which depicts Cassius explaining to Brutus the senses, the humors, and the imagination’s pliability and unreliability (136). There are also a few brief conventional mentions of the conspirators as being “all of one mind”, of Cassius as “compelled against my mind and will” to wage all on the unsuccessful battle, and of “Cassius’ friends which were of his mind before” regarding the battle becoming “of Brutus’ mind” (118, 139). These helpfully gesture towards the everyday nature of notions of a fused group mind, cognitive fission, and socially extended cognition, but do not explore the ramifications as does Shakespeare.

In a typically Shakespearean sleight of hand, Julius Caesar’s assassination by the conspirators is immediately followed by a metadramatic anticipation of its later theatrical performance. In Genette’s terms, albeit reapplied to drama, this plays on the “temporal duality” (*Narrative Discourse* 33) of the event in the world and in the play:

CASSIUS . . . How many ages hence  
 Shall this our lofty scene be acted over  
 In states unborn and accents yet unknown!  
 BRUTUS How many times shall Caesar bleed in sport,  
 That now on Pompey's basis lies along  
 No worthier than the dust!  
 CASSIUS So oft as that shall be,  
 So often shall the knot of us be called  
 The men that gave their country liberty. (3.1.111-18)

This simultaneously highlights the illusory and historically real nature of the scene, and yet rather than creating fission between actors and audience, it is creative of a conspiratorial intimacy. The characters are moved into a position of external focalization on their actions that more closely approximates and frames the audience's reaction. It amplifies the audience's involvement, as conversely the audience is seemingly sucked back in time out of their world to become witnesses to the aftermath of the original murder. This shared narrative, which imagines a future staging, indirectly appears to verify the reality of the current enactment, magnifying a sense of triumph.

This is juxtaposed with Antony's narrative, which foresees not future applause but the destructive sequence of events that will follow, and which grants a horrifying narrative agency to the speechless corpse:

Over thy wounds now do I prophesy,  
 (Which, like dumb mouths, do ope their ruby lips,  
 To beg the voice and utterance of my tongue)  
 A curse shall light upon the limbs of men;  
 Domestic fury and fierce civil strife  
 Shall cumber all the parts of Italy (3.1.259-64)

The capacity of the gory gaping body itself to speak and direct events, to spout blood flow through the ensuing scenes, is brought about through Antony's giving voice and agency to it. Antony undercuts the self-aggrandizing narrative of the faction through the fusion of his identity with Caesar's corpse, so enabling Caesar's power to reach beyond his death. In describing the motivation for human co-operation in social prosthetic systems, Kosslyn writes that "if one perceives that one's identity is distributed over the group, one will not perceive one's death as obliterating the self—and to some extent, this perception is not erroneous" ("Evolution" 551). In such ways Caesar motivates events even posthumously (as Pompey's statue looming over Caesar's corpse also seems to achieve a posthumous revenge).

Shakespeare simultaneously explores and exposes the combined techniques of showing and telling through which he himself moves the audience. Shakespeare plays on the concerns voiced by anti-theatricalists about playgoing, and by the elite about the underclasses, with both underprivileged groundlings and the nobility in the galleries making up his audience; the first, he mocks through his representation of the feigning Cassius who "loves no plays" (1.2.202), and the second, he prods through the many-voiced but seemingly single-minded "Plebeians." Evoking both concerns, the tribune Flavius in the play's opening lines comically commands: "Hence! home, you idle creatures, get you home! / Is this a holiday?" (1.1.1-2). The plebeians' easily swayed group mind is first placated by Brutus's account of the need for Caesar's murder, then gradually roused back again to uproar by Antony:

If you have tears, prepare to shed them now.  
 You all do know this mantle: I remember  
 The first time ever Caesar put it on;  
 'Twas on a summer's evening, in his tent,  
 That day he overcame the Nervii:  
 Look, in this place ran Cassius' dagger through:  
 See what a rent the envious Casca made:  
 Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabbed; . . .  
 For when the noble Caesar saw him stab,  
 Ingratitude, more strong than traitor's arms,  
 Quite vanquished him: then burst his mighty heart;  
 And, in his mantle muffling up his face,  
 Even at the base of Pompey's statua,  
 Which all the while ran blood, great Caesar fell.  
 O, what a fall was there, my countrymen!  
 Then I, and you, and all of us fell down,  
 Whilst bloody treason flourished over us. (3.2.167-74, 3.2.182-90)

Antony generates the crowd's pity and fury by pointedly juxtaposing one of Caesar's martial triumphs with his violent stabbing by his supposed friends and with the loved Brutus striking the killing blow. Giovanna Colombetti discusses how the sharing of affective states across groups creates social bonding and collective action; and here it later leads to reckless rampage and the absurd murder of Cinna the poet only for sharing the name of Cinna the conspirator (194-202; 3.3). Antony further amplifies their empathy, by depicting the fall as not of Caesar alone, but of them all jointly at the conspirators' hands, as physical and figural are superimposed. In this further reverberation of the assassination and of its earlier replay, Antony places the crowd at the scene in the same way the audience in the theater have been placed by Cassius's and Brutus's speeches, but here the crowd become the falling Caesar. This further reverberation also invites the audience's critical self-reflexivity regarding their own cognitive and affective susceptibility and pliability. There is a doubling of engagement through the supplementation of the visual by the verbal and the verbal by the visual, with a climax the uncovering of the still bleeding body. Antony evokes immediacy and bloodiness in a graphically forceful and materially mediated way, so overturning Brutus's spare and restrained rhetoric that appealed to rationality, virtue and honor as humanity's motivating forces. He simultaneously claims for his account a transparency that he contrasts with Brutus's rhetoric, further heightening the power of his physically figurative and anti-rhetorical rhetoric over the crowd.

Another angle on the difference is offered by Schaeffer, who distinguishes between forms of fiction in terms of "immersion vectors" (the means by which we access a fictional universe) and related "immersion postures" (the perspectives assigned to us by the vectors): these occur along an axis that stretches from "purely mental immersion (the one that is induced by a fictional tale) to immersion in an inner-worldly situation (the one of a theatre actor . . . )" (218-19). Schaeffer describes how the "simulation of inner-worldly elements" occurs in a theater, as the two universes of reality and fiction superimpose on each other: it uses real physical space, objects and human beings and therefore assigns to the spectator not the simulation of a perspective flux (as in the cinema), but a vector of "attending to events" (224). Yet Shakespeare's theatrical works often simultaneously deploy a range of immersion vectors or set them against one another; for example, this scene elicits the human capacities for mental immersion through attending to a tale and through attending to onstage events.

The narrative that sets this all in motion is Cassius's claim to Brutus that he can act as mirror to his mind. Brutus's third person account of himself to Cassius as internally fissured, "poor Brutus, with himself at war," prompts Cassius's cynical intervention. In a passage absent in Plutarch's *Lives*, Cassius, who is intent on persuading Caesar's protégé Brutus to participate in Caesar's assassination, attempts to convince him of the necessity of socially extended reflexivity:

CASSIUS.        Tell me, good Brutus, can you see your face?  
BRUTUS.        No, Cassius, for the eye sees not itself  
                    But by reflection, by some other things.  
CASSIUS.        'Tis just;  
                    And it is very much lamented, Brutus,  
                    That you have no such mirrors as will turn  
                    Your hidden worthiness into your eye,  
                    That you might see your shadow . . .  
                    And since you know you cannot see yourself  
                    So well as by reflection, I, your glass,  
                    Will modestly discover to yourself  
                    That of yourself which you yet know not of. (1.2.50-60, 1.2.69-72)

Cassius attempts to convince Brutus that the limits of perception, the inability of the face and the eyes to see themselves other than through the process of reflection, are akin to the limits of introspection, of a parallel psychological inability of the subject to apprehend its own qualities, without a form of socially extended reflexivity. Montaigne comments that others can often draw more from him than he can find in himself, and that sometimes when he has lost the point of what he was saying, that a stranger may discover it before he could (31-32). As in Dennett's more extreme stance the mind is potentially more transparent to another than to oneself; and as in Kosslyn's theory, other people's minds are described as acting as cognitive supplements to one's biological capacities. The significance of this offering of extended reflexivity can best be understood through attention to the distinctively human capacity of reflective knowledge in Renaissance schemas, since there is an understanding that what marks out the human mind is its ability to reflect on itself: "The difference between the Reason of man, and the Instinct of the beast is this, That the beast does but know, but the man knows that he knows" (Donne 8, ll. 225).

But here Cassius proposes the external medium of his extrospective perspective instead as the necessary supplement to Brutus's troubled introspection; this also suggests the way in which language utilizes and extends our capacity to be both receptive to and generative of cognition in others. Recast in Tollefsen's terms, Cassius offers to act as an Inga for Brutus. Yet Shakespeare here explores the problematics of such cognitive social supplements. The self-interest involved in Cassius's claim to be the bearer of Brutus's true reflection is revealed in an aside: "If I were Brutus now, and he were Cassius, / He should not humour me" (1.2.313-14). This counterfactual exchange of positions counterpoints his explicit mirroring of Brutus. Cassius's sense of superiority, despite his inferior social status, is due to his capacity to manipulate Brutus while remaining seemingly untouched and opaque. Yet again in the aside, support is given to the underlying notion of socially constituted cognitive processes and subjectivity: "Thy honourable mettle may be wrought / From that it is disposed. Therefore it is meet / That noble minds keep ever with their likes" (1.2.307-10). By the end, though, it is evident that Machiavellian minds are not immune to cognitive contagion either. So Cassius's extrospective perspective here is shown to be problematically motivated by his own opaque subjective aims. The notion of cognitive reception and generation as potentially involving only



a partial fusion, is echoed in the primarily one-way manipulation of the masses by Brutus and Antony. This latter aspect of social cognition can also be framed in terms of Karin Kukkonen's theory of "top-heavy" social minds ("Top-Heavy Social Minds").

The notion of cognitive and moral susceptibility ties in both with anti-theatricalists and pro-theatricalists' beliefs about the capacity of theater: while Thomas White asserted that "the cause of plagues is sinne, if you looke to it well: and the cause of sinne are playes: therefore the cause of plagues are playes" (47), Thomas Heywood describes how theater "hath power to new mold the harts of the spectators and fashion them to the shape of any noble and notable attempt" (sig. B4r). Either way, theater is understood as an emulatory activity that morally alters and cognitively shapes the spectator. Shakespeare self-consciously stages the human tendency to observe others' behavior, actions, and words and to ascribe attitudes and beliefs to them; this staging bears out the relevance of Herman's argument about the general human propensity to employ intentionality and for us as readers or spectators to apply it in our analysis of Shakespeare. From another angle this reflects the problem with fusion indicated by Jakob Hohwy: by not simply merging another's view with one's own, by maintaining fission and resisting fusion, one retains a range of available interpretations; whereas to the extent one submits to fusion with another mind, one may be cognitively and morally altered for the worse. Conversely, though, such fusions may be for the better. In fact, it is Cassius who is morally and cognitively altered, for although he remains flawed, he ends by offering a noble albeit doomed verbal mirroring of Brutus. Rather than the anti-theatricalists, then, we might argue for a theatrical staging of the positive pro-theatricalist narrative with a touching (though not untroubled) reciprocity in the final scenes, in contradistinction to the earlier proffered generative, one-way, extended reflexivity.

Brutus is further roused to action through letters apparently authored by citizens but which the audience know are sent by Cassius, which echo and seem to validate Cassius's plea, calling on Brutus to awake and "see thyself;" this fission between audience and character perspectives heightens the pathos of Brutus's credulity (2.1; 1.2.314-16). Brutus attempts yet fails to create introspectively the cognitive fission necessary for revelatory self-reflection. That Brutus's internal fissures have been intensified by Cassius's proffered reflexivity, he describes in a soliloquy in which he attempts to reason it out:

Since Cassius first did whet me against Caesar,  
I have not slept.  
Between the acting of a dreadful thing  
And the first motion, all the interim is  
Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream:  
The Genius and the mortal instruments  
Are then in council; and the state of man,  
Like to a little kingdom, suffers then  
The nature of an insurrection. (2.1.61-69)

Brutus's internal prefiguring of civil uprising reflects the conventional understanding of the quasi-autonomous agencies that constitute the self, and the analogy between subject and world. Brutus here adopts a Dennettian "intentional stance" as a means to fathom his own mental unrest; however, it finally does not generate insights so much as a justificatory narrative.

Montaigne similarly describes the conflict created by his many-faceted mutability and the inferential stance consequently required, which he argues reflects a more general human predicament:

I give my soul now one face, now another, according to which direction I turn it. If I speak of myself in different ways, that is because I look at myself in different ways . . . All contradictions may be found in me by some twist and in some fashion . . . and whoever studies himself really attentively finds in himself, yes, even in his judgment, this gyration and discord. (293-94)

As in Brutus's case, consciousness and self-consciousness are both problematically implicated, with this fissured experientiality iconically staged in the twists and turns of the multi-claused sentence structure. Both fictional and non-fictional narratives may convey the transparency and opacity of others (and oneself). Like Hohwy, Montaigne also argues that to minimize the tendency to make errors one must maintain distance from others' viewpoints, though this is necessarily limited from the start by the extent to which the social is already within: it "is not enough to get away from the crowd; we must get away from the gregarious instincts that are inside us" in an attempt to "sequester and repossess ourselves" (213). Montaigne describes how we imagine as morally right what are actually inherited notions, as we confuse local customs with the natural laws of conscience and reason (100); the extended or collective mind is no more reliable than that of an individual.

Despite their collective intention to assassinate Caesar, with the basis for this a diachronic form of group mind borne out of their shared Roman blood and ancestors, fissions are also evident in the faction: in a farcical prefiguring of the misperceptions of the fatal battle, they cannot even agree which way (the literal and symbolic) dawn lies (2.1. 100-110). Similarly, despite their joint aim and sworn allegiance, Antony and Octavius later cannot agree who will attack from the left or right (5.1.16-20). Cassius's transformation is also preceded by an internal fission, caused by Brutus's moral upbraiding, though it is Brutus's later confession of displaying ill temper himself that leads to reconciliation, alongside a misogynist (but conventional) casting off of Cassius's outburst as generated by his mother: "When you are over-earnest with your Brutus, / He'll think your mother chides, and leave you so" (4.3.121-22). Thus a relegation of an internal aspect of Cassius's character to an external agency allows for a renewed fusion of hands and hearts between Cassius and Brutus.

Cassius's attempts to lead Brutus ultimately fail, as Brutus idealistically persuades him not to kill Antony, by describing Caesar and Antony as if they are one agent (composed of unequal parts) and claiming that "Our course will seem too bloody . . . / To cut the head off and then hack the limbs" (2.1.161-62). Cassius in the spirit of reconciliation is persuaded to set all on one ill-advised battle against his own will. It is, then, the choleric and cynical Cassius who is finally transformed from his much-cited statement of Epicurean self-determination, "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, / But in ourselves, that we are underlings," to the less-cited admission of the wider sphere of influences by which we are constituted: "Now I change my mind, / And partly credit things that do presage" (1.2.141-42, 5.1.77-78). As Werner Wolf and Brian Richardson have argued, narratives provide sense-making and world-modeling functions, with the representation of chance and causation providing privileged access to implied worldviews.

By the tragic end Cassius mirrors Brutus's words in conformity not in coercion:

BRUTUS      For ever, and for ever, farewell, Cassius.

                 If we do meet again, why, we shall smile.

                 If not, why then, this parting was well made.

CASSIUS      For ever, and for ever, farewell, Brutus.

                 If we do meet again, we'll smile indeed.

                 If not, 'tis true this parting was well made. (5.3.117-22)

The nostalgic mirroring of the narrative creates an electrifying intensity and yet hypnotic lulling through the uncanny mimicry of its reiteration. This reiteration transmits an echoing sensation, with a sense of looking forward and backward simultaneously via the counterfactual imagined futures. Against his original Machiavellian intentions Cassius ironically becomes the true mirror he claimed to be to Brutus. This is in keeping with the Platonic philosophy to which Brutus adhered, which is also the main source for the notion that like the eye, the mind sees not itself, and for the notion that the beloved and the lover mirror one another in a mutually reflexive relationship (*Alcibiades* 133b; *Phaedrus*, 255d-e). Adding a further layer of irony, Cassius's "sight," as he acknowledges at the end, was "ever thick," a corporeal equivalent to his limited and clouded insight and foresight (5.3.21). That this brings his downfall in the battle, as victory is mistaken for defeat, is more poignantly wrought even than his assisted self-murder. Brutus is also subject to this blindness, in his failure to acknowledge the tension between his idealistic principles and the orgiastic assassination, his hypocritical demand of extorted money from Cassius, and his pretense of calm in the face of the already-known news of his wife Portia's suicide. Cassius, like Brutus, is killed with the sword that killed Caesar (as if it revenges Caesar), and by the hand of his servant Pindarus, who is paradoxically freed by performing this act against his own will (5.3.44-45). Brutus and Cassius are assisted to their "suicides" by their fellows, closing the play with unresolved questions regarding the boundaries of agency; these fatal penetrations bring a fittingly masculine end to the tragic friends, an end that is heroic *and* all too human: as Antony eulogises over Brutus's body: "This was a man!" (5.5.76).

## Conclusion

In Shakespeare's plays we can observe the characters in dramatic performance in a way that is closer to real-world experience of narrative, which employs not only verbal but also gestural and embodied dynamics to relate sequences of events. Shakespeare and Montaigne evoke mental dispositions, beliefs, and desires as embodied and extended, but also as potentially fissured within an individual and between individuals. While the extended mind involves fusion between individuals, this may only be partial, and individual cognitive processing is also shown to involve fusion and fission between internal agencies, with neither fusion nor fission in either case necessarily positive or negative. Both Shakespeare and Montaigne explore a number of different forms of mind, including the group and the coupled mind, and the receptive and the generative faculties of the mind, so that helpful comparisons can be made with current notions of the social mind. Third-person perspectives, visual perception, and introspection are compared in terms of performing similar functions. Furthermore, Shakespeare deploys the affordance of the dramatic form to extend the collective mind from the characters to the audience, with *Julius Caesar* representing and playing upon notions of both the intramental and intermental as social and multiple. The mind is portrayed as constituted through ad hoc fusions and fissions that operate within and across skull and skin boundaries, with moments of transparency and opacity both in understanding one's own mind, as well as that of others. Phenomenological experience is viewed as problematically being distorted by the mutable subject, whether or not one is relying on the intramental or intermental mind, yet this variably capacious and constrained mental panorama is also figured as having an (unreliable) capacity to reflect on itself, and finally, despite and because of it all, to be capable of cognitive reflexivity and reciprocity.

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<sup>1</sup> The research that has contributed to this paper was generously supported by the Leverhulme Trust and by an AHRC grant for the project "A History of Distributed Cognition."